

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for isolating theanine from a plant material, comprising:
  - a) contacting the plant material with a solvent to obtain an extract comprising theanine;
  - b) contacting the theanine extract with an adsorbent to obtain a theanine-containing eluate; and
  - c) subjecting the theanine-containing eluate to a filtration step to obtain a theanine-rich extract.
2. The process of Claim 1 wherein the plant material comprises tea leaves.
3. The process of Claim 2 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of water, ethanol, and mixtures thereof.
4. The process of Claim 3 wherein the adsorbent is a polymeric resin.
5. The process of Claim 1 wherein in step b), the contacting comprises:
  - i) adding the adsorbent to the theanine extract in a container;
  - ii) mixing the adsorbent and the theanine extract; and
  - iii) separating the theanine eluate from the adsorbent.
6. The process of Claim 5 wherein the solvent comprises less than about 20% ethanol, by weight of the solvent.
7. The process of Claim 6 wherein the solvent comprises water.
8. The process of Claim 7 wherein the adsorbent is a polyamide.
9. The process of Claim 1 wherein step b) is performed using column extraction.
10. The process of Claim 9 wherein the theanine-rich extract of step c) is further concentrated.

11. A process for isolating theanine from a plant material, comprising performing the following steps in order:
  - a) contacting the plant material with a solvent to obtain an extract comprising theanine;
  - b) microfiltering the theanine extract and retaining a theanine-containing retentate;
  - c) contacting the theanine-containing retentate with an adsorbent to obtain a theanine-containing eluate; and
  - d) subjecting the theanine-containing eluate to a filtration step to obtain a theanine-rich extract.
12. The process of Claim 11 wherein the plant material comprises tea leaves.
13. The process of Claim 12 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of water, ethanol, and mixtures thereof.
14. The process of Claim 11 wherein in step c), the contacting comprises:
  - i) diluting the theanine-containing retentate with water;
  - ii) adding the adsorbent to the diluted theanine-containing retentate in a container;
  - iii) mixing the adsorbent and the theanine-containing retentate; and
  - iv) separating the theanine eluate from the adsorbent.
15. The process of Claim 14 wherein the solvent comprises less than about 20% ethanol; by weight of the solvent.
16. The process of Claim 11 wherein in step (b), the microfiltering is followed by a second filtering method selected from the group consisting of ultrafiltering, nanofiltering and combinations thereof.
17. The process of Claim 14 wherein the adsorbent is a polyamide.
18. The process of Claim 11 wherein step c) is performed using column extraction.
19. The process of Claim 11 wherein the theanine-rich extract of step d) is further concentrated.

20. A process for isolating theanine from plant material, comprising:
- a) contacting the plant material with a solvent to obtain an extract comprising theanine;
  - b) subjecting the theanine extract to column extraction with a polyamide adsorbent to obtain a theanine-containing eluate;
  - c) subjecting the theanine-containing eluate to ultrafiltration to obtain a theanine-rich extract; and
  - d) further concentrating the theanine-rich extract.